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SUBJECT: S/P'S ROSS, COHEN AND PATEL MEET WITH CONGOLESE
OFFICIALS IN GOMA TO DISCUSS INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN THE
FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND SGBV

REF: KINSHASA 857

¶1. (U) Introductory note: S/P staffers Alec Ross, Jared Cohen and Mira Patel visited Kinshasa and Goma September 9-12. Reftel is an account of the Kinshasa portion of their trip. This message refers their meetings in Goma. End introductory note.

Courtesy Call with Vice Governor of North Kivu

¶2. (SBU) During a brief courtesy call with Lutaichirwa Mulwahale Feller, the vice governor of North Kivu, Ross and reiterated how touched Secretary Clinton was by her recent visit to Goma and explained that his visit was intended as a follow-up mission during which he aimed to listen and learn about DRC's needs, challenges, and opportunities. Ross and Cohen described the delegation's objectives and underlined the possibilities that the use of technology could bring to the justice and banking sectors. After expressing his solidarity with the U.S. on the anniversary of 9/11, the vice governor expressed his gratitude for the interest that the USG had taken in the DRC and particularly North Kivu, noting that Secretary Clinton's visit had given hope to a people beleaguered by years of conflict, massive population displacement, widespread rape, and trauma. He thanked USAID in particular for its significant efforts to help improve the country and foster a durable peace. Agreeing that technology could be a valuable tool to improve life in the DRC, the vice governor emphasized that improving the security situation was the top priority and that the Congolese people were counting on the U.S. to help end the FDLR threat, including by advocating the arrest of FDLR leaders who continue to operate in Europe and convincing the FDLR combatants in the DRC to turn themselves into MONUC and return to Rwanda. The vice governor also outlined the importance of U.S. support for STAREC, the stabilization and recovery plan for the DRC, which he said would provide long-term relief to the victims of the conflict. Ross acknowledged the vice governor's request and thanked him for the warm reception.

Visit to Mugunga I IDP Camp

¶3. (SBU) During a visit to the Mugunga I IDP camp, which Secretary Clinton visited, Ross and Cohen broke off separately to visit with IDP-run community watch teams and female IDP leaders. Eager to obtain as many opinions as possible, Ross and Cohen engaged directly and spoke to women carrying firewood, youth, people in their homes, and various residents of the IDP camp who were walking around or otherwise engaged. In talking to some of the camp's 18,643 IDPs, Cohen and Ross learned of the atrocities they had endured and escaped and the daily hardships they have faced amid life in an IDP camp. The women they spoke with refuted assumptions that cell phones would make them more of a target and emphasized how these channels for communications could enhance their security. They learned of a number of associations (i.e. widows organizations) that could possess cell phones and be in charge of receiving and disseminating information. Most women noted that they do not have cell phones. In speaking to women carrying firewood, Ross and Cohen

learned that they have started traveling in organized groups to collect firewood so as to be protected by numbers. When asked if this was their own innovation, or a suggestion by the NGO community, the women explained that they started doing this on their own. Ross and Cohen asked the women who they would call if they were in trouble. There seemed to be general agreement that it would be each other or the camp administrator. They were emphatic about not trusting the police.

14. (SBU) Patel spoke separately to camp administrators and the UNHCR, and received briefings from Mercy Corps and International Medical Corps (IMC) regarding their SGBV-related programs in the camp. UNHCR informed her that more than 80 percent of the camp's 18,643 IDPs had declared in recently conducted surveys their intention to spontaneously and voluntarily return to their zones of origin, and that the camp would likely be closed in three weeks time, meaning that those IDPs choosing not to return would be relocated in another of the Goma area's IDP camps. According to UNHCR, the IDPs who declared their intention to return, the majority of whom were expected to return to Sake (Masisi Territory) and villages just north of Sake, had decided to return around late September because they believed the security situation had improved, because there was an expectation that humanitarian groups would provide assistance in their zones of origin, and because they wanted to be in their home villages before the start of the school year, the planting season, and the rainy season. While some IDPs said the government and "the humanitarians," including the UNHCR, were pressuring them to leave the camp, in part through a reduction of food rations, other IDPs simply echoed the results of the surveys, citing improved security and the start of the school year and planting season as reasons for returning.

15. (SBU) While it was not clear exactly what kind of assistance

humanitarian groups would ultimately provide the IDPs once they embarked on their return, the Ross delegation saw firsthand the kind of assistance the IDPs were receiving on a daily basis in the camp, from health care to access to fuel efficient stoves. In the IMC-run health center that was treating an average of 120 IDPs each day, and which included a pharmacy, maternity unit, and a nutrition unit, among other services, the delegation had the opportunity to learn about the medical and psychosocial services available to rape victims in the health center's specialized sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV) unit, which was unlabeled and shared office space with other parts of the health center, so as to provide anonymity for visitors. Congolese and international IMC officers who ran the unit said they had provided medical and psychosocial services to approximately 150 female survivors of SGBV since October 2007 and that they were treating approximately five to ten female survivors of SGBV each month, down from 20 per month about six months ago. The unit treated girls and women who had been raped prior to arriving in the camp, as well as women who had been raped in the camp and just outside the camp, while collecting firewood. The SGBV unit provides kits to those who were raped not more than three days before visiting the unit; the kits are intended to prevent pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmittable diseases. When dealing with the five or so women each month who have been raped in or around the IDP camp, the SGBV unit provides legal referral services, although in the overwhelming majority of cases the perpetrator is never identified.

16. (SBU) Twenty-year-old female camp resident Mbizi Vestina, who was receiving treatment in the SGBV unit and agreed to be interviewed by the delegation, said two unidentified men raped her in 2008 just outside the camp while she was gathering firewood. Her infant twins, a result of the rape, clung to her silently during the interview as she explained that her network of community support collapsed once her family and friends learned that she had been raped; while former friends and family had seemed to blame and resent her following the rape, which is an all-too-common social phenomenon resulting from rape in the DRC, Mbizi was now receiving support from the SGBV unit's specialists, the only people she said she could turn to.

17. (SBU) Agnes Tabu, a 49-year-old women from Masisi Territory, told the delegation that she was raped by six unidentified FARDC

soldiers while gathering food in a field near her village. The IMC's SGBV specialists used Agnes' case to underline the paradox in eastern Congo: essentials such as food are so important, and sometimes scarce amid the ongoing fighting, that women are forced to ignore repeated warnings urging girls and women not to subject themselves to situations in which they will be vulnerable to rape. Agnes said she was afraid to go back to Masisi.

¶18. (SBU) During a briefing by Mercy Corps, the delegation learned about Mercy Corp's program that was providing camp residents with fuel-efficient stoves, which are intended to not only promote responsible environmental stewardship (the stoves reduce wood use by 70 percent), but also eliminate the need for girls and women to venture outside the camp for firewood, a trip that makes them vulnerable to rape. The clay stoves also provide income-generation that help empower women; the 300 or so women whom Mercy Corps has taught to build the stoves receives \$1.50 for each stove they make.

¶19. (SBU) Later the embassy provided new soccer balls to the delegation, which distributed them to children in the camp. The distribution provoked a raucous celebration among the children, prompting discussion within the delegation about the possible use of an expanded sports program in the camp (for both girls and boys), particularly to provide more males in the camp with a form of social engagement and something to do with their time, which the delegation thought might help reduce the number of rapes in the camp.

Dinner with MONUC

¶10. (SBU) A dinner with MONUC military and civil affairs personnel included Lt. Col. Michel Godin of the MONUC Forward HQ, Edem Blege, head of MONUC Civil Affairs in North Kivu, Raphael Yoho Fils of the MONUC Human Rights Office, Esteban Sacco, the head of OCHA in North Kivu, and Matthew Brubaker of MONUC DDRRR. During the dinner Ross, Cohen, and Patel discussed the various security and development challenges facing MONUC and the UN in general in North Kivu and potential steps that could be taken to advance the fight against SGBV.

¶11. (SBU) Raphael Yoho Fils of the MONUC Human Rights Office in North Kivu underlined that impunity was the root cause of the SGBV crisis in eastern DRC and that although he was unsure whether technology had a significant role to play in fighting the problem, the rape epidemic would not cease until rapists, both within the security forces and outside them, were held accountable by a more effective, more reliable, more independent Congolese judiciary. He urged that no matter how many women the donor community provided

with psychosocial treatment, it would have little long-term effect on the problem without being accompanied by judicial strengthening assistance. He suggested that the U.S. consider focusing on what he considered two glaring needs in the DRC, the need for more courthouses (one for each territory) and more female judicial actors, particularly female magistrates and lawyers. Programs addressing both of these needs would adhere to and complement the comprehensive strategy to fight SGBV that MONUC and the GDRC launched in the spring but have had difficulty implementing.

¶12. (SBU) Yoho Fils also recommended that long-term programs that might not seem directly related to the SGBV program at first glance may have more impact than some of the technology-related ideas he had heard bandied about in the press following Secretary Clinton's visit. For example, since women are most vulnerable to rape while in Congolese prisons and detention centers, he recommended considering investment in the construction or monitoring of prisons. Virtually all detention centers in Congo, which suffer from life-threatening conditions, lack separate facilities for women and children; when asked if there could be a use for technology in monitoring the detention centers, he said perhaps technology (video cameras, etc) could help prevent the high risk of SGBV in detention centers (for both women and men). In addition, since SGBV is a country-wide problem stemming from the lack of women's rights in general in the DRC, he suggested establishing a training institute to build the capacity of civil society, including NGOs focusing on

various aspects of women's rights. He asserted that, given the absence of political will and lack of capacity in the DRC government to protect women's rights, it would be immensely helpful to assist civil society groups to develop advocacy and investigatory skills and to specialize in certain areas helpful not only to the fight against SGBV specifically but also to advancing women's social status and DRC development in the long-run.

¶13. (SBU) During the dinner Ross also discussed the possibilities of using technology to increase citizen-driven accountability mechanisms and to incentivize good behavior in the security forces in order to reduce acts of SGBV by security forces.

Chamber of Commerce roundtable and visit to a "Comptoir"

¶14. (SBU) During a roundtable with members of the Federation des Entreprises Congolaises (FEC), a Congolese chamber of commerce, Ross and Cohen explored the challenges of ensuring transparent management of natural resources amid conflict and widespread corruption. Separately and in addition to the meeting with FEC, Ross and Cohen visited several "comptoirs" (mineral sales outlet). Mr. Makabuza, the director general of GMC, explained that securing the mines is the biggest challenge that he as a comptoir owner faces. One area in Walikale Territory of North Kivu Province accounts for 80 percent of the cassiterite for the entire province, but in this secluded area the mining zones are not well protected or controlled, Makabuza said. He faulted the government for failing to provide security, failing to monitor the artisanal miners, and failing conduct proper investigations before issuing prospecting permits to companies, which has caused problems with local who had also been granted permits for the same areas. Despite the establishment of a mining code a few years ago, the comptoir owners asserted that the \$5

million per year (including taxes to local governments) that the mining sector contributes to the DRC economy is "never included" in any government reports; this lack of oversight, they maintained, illustrates the need for capacity strengthening programs for the government "to plug these leaks" in the mining sector. Makabuza stressed that he would participate in a "clean" supply chain if one is secured, but that he does not want to be held responsible for a "dirty" supply chain.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: Makabuza is tied by the human rights groups to historically Rwandan-backed militias, specifically the CNDP, and the main purpose of the meeting was for Makabuza (who owns transport, mining and other companies) to "send a message" that he would participate in a clean supply chain if one is secured; but that he does not want to be held responsible for a dirty supply chain. This reflects the reality of the new Kigame/Kabila partnership that has put these groups on weaker footing in East Congo. End Comment.

¶16. (SBU) Makabuza said that he and his fellow businessmen are aware of the movement to expose the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC and have cooperated with efforts, including efforts by some international NGOs, to expose such exploitation. He asserted that despite the comptoirs' cooperation, NGOs such as Global Witness unfairly portray the comptoirs/businessmen in the mining sector as lacking ethics. Responding to a question from Cohen, he said the comptoirs continue to share a lot of documents and other information with the UN Group of Experts, and that he and all of his fellow comptoir owners/businessmen pay proper taxes on their investments. He derided the most recent Global Witness reports for lack of credibility and unfounded allegations against

the comptoirs, and he asserted repeatedly that the comptoirs should not be expected to "play policemen" regarding illegal or shady activities in the mining sector by others.

¶17. (SBU) In response to a question from Ross, the comptoir owners explained to Ross and Cohen how they are attempting to organize the traders, local miners, and aviation companies (which transport mining good) into cooperatives in order to create "a chain of transmission" and increase traceability and transparency in the sector. Makabuza, whose rumored membership in the RCD may undermine

the credibility of some of his assertions, claimed that the armed groups and the military are no longer involved in the production or trade of minerals. He added that with the progress that has been made in the sector, the comptoirs should, with the ongoing advice of end-user cooperatives and the UN Group of Experts, push for the establishment of a reliable traceability system, similar to ETEI. Makabuza, who thanked USAID for organizing recent seminars on "Trading for Peace", appealed for additional U.S. assistance in establishing an ETEI-like system in the DRC, including the provision of proper training to support such a system.

¶18. (SBU) Before beginning the visit to the comptoir, Cohen and Ross thanked the FEC members for the information, their suggestions, and their candor. Ross emphasized that the delegation was on a listening mission and that this meeting was the start of a larger conversation with the aim of helping the DRC. Cohen explained that private companies and certain technologies might be able to contribute to a solution and that the U.S. would continue to explore how to further strengthen the mining sector in the DRC.

Roundtable on SGBV

¶19. (SBU) During a roundtable on SGBV involving approximately 20 local and international NGOs, some showing up without an invitation and insisting on participating, Patel and Ross listened to a vibrant discussion on the challenges and opportunities regarding the fight against SGBV in the DRC. Patel explained that it was important, for the sake of SGBV survivors, that we continue to build upon the momentum generated by the visit of Secretary Clinton. A few NGOs, such as Heal Africa, which Patel visited earlier in the day, emphasized that while the U.S. focus on SGBV was helpful and could be a stepping stone to address other, larger development problems, such as deficiencies in maternal health across the DRC, a narrow focus on SGBV could run the risk of ignoring other needs related to women's and children's health, and this result could ultimately undermine the effectiveness of programs focused on SGBV. For example, some health centers and hospitals that receive pepkits through donor funds targeting SGBV too often end up with so little medicines in their supply cabinets that doctors and nurses are forced to "raid" the SGBV-focused pepkits for medicines needed urgently by non-SGBV patients. Other health-focused NGOs underlined the need for donors to better understand the needs associated with SGBV, noting that the current SGBV-related emphasis by donors on support for fistula repair was misplaced, as less than 5 percent of all fistulas result from rape (the overwhelming majority result from childbirth).

¶20. (SBU) Michael Kramer of the ICRC suggested that if the USG aimed to support activities that could protect women and girls from rape, it should consider using its technological tools to establish a "panic button" system, perhaps in a pilot village for starters. Such a system would resemble emergency call stations (the poles with red buttons) that often dot U.S. university campuses to help prevent rape, robbery, and other assaults on campus. The system would have to be wirelessly connected to either a private security firm or the local police force, so that a pressed button would trigger a signal for the anti-rape security services to deploy immediately. To be sustainable, Kramer said, such a system would need to be linked to the police and be accompanied by old-fashion capacity building (training) for the police. Another idea, this one from a local NGO called "Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes de la Violence Sexuelle," (Women in Synergy for Victims of Sexual Violence) identified the need for legal reforms and strengthening the judiciary so it can better adjudicate rape cases and implement the country's 2006 law on sexual violence.

¶21. (SBU) After more than two hours of conversation, during which the majority of NGOs urged a long-term approach to women's rights in the DRC and not merely one that focused on SGBV, Patel thanked the NGO participants and explained that this follow-up mission to the recent visit by Secretary Clinton was not a one-off visit. Following an exchange of numerous business cards and contact information, the conversation and the partnership that the roundtable furthered was slated to continue. The participants were vocal in expressing their appreciation not only of the visit by Secretary Clinton but also of the follow-up mission and the willingness of Patel and the delegation to ask so many questions and

listen so intently.

Interviews with Goma Police

¶22. (SBU) During their day traveling around Goma, Cohen rode around in multiple police vehicles to interview a dozen or so police officers in Swahili. The police explained to him that they earn \$35 a month if they are lucky and they need at least \$100 to provide for their families. They mentioned that while corruption is rampant, financial incentives would reduce corruption among those police who do shake downs out of "necessity."

¶23. (U) S/P cleared this message.

BROCK